

Mercy Corps

Evaluation and Assessment of Poverty and Conflict Interventions

Uganda Case Study Report



Photograph: Jenny Vaughan/Mercy Corps

Abstract:

This case study is part of a USAID-funded research grant that looks at the relationship between economic development and stability. In many parts of the world, Mercy Corps implements programs that combine economic development and peacebuilding approaches. The *Evaluation and Assessment of Poverty and Conflict Interventions* project – implemented between July 2009 and December 2010 – had three main objectives: 1) to develop indicators and data collection tools that measure the impact of programs at the intersection of peacebuilding and economic development; 2) to field test these indicators and tools in three countries; and 3) to begin to assess several theories of change that inform Mercy Corps' programs. This report presents preliminary findings from the Uganda case study, where Mercy Corps implements the *Building Bridges to Peace* program in the northeastern Karamoja region. Findings include several strong correlations between economic variables and stability measures, including: 1) positive correlations between market interaction, resource sharing, and freedom of movement; and 2) positive correlations between resource sharing and reduction in violent incidents.

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Acronyms

BBP	Building Bridges to Peace
CRM	Conflict and Resource Mapping
EAPC	Evaluation and Assessment of Poverty and Conflict Interventions
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SCRM	Scored Community Relationship Mapping
UPDF	Uganda People’s Defense Force
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1. Executive Summary

A significant body of knowledge exists on the relationship between poverty, conflict, and state failure. In his influential book *The Bottom Billion*, Paul Collier shows strong statistical support for the claim that conflict is clustered in the worlds' poorest nations. He also shows that unless economic growth takes place post-conflict, a nation has a 44% chance of slipping back into violence. Columbia scholar Macartan Humphreys confirms that as per capita GDP decreases, the probability of conflict increases.¹ Driven in part by these findings, donors and their partners are implementing increasing numbers of economic development programs in conflict and post-conflict environments, based on the assumption that these will contribute to *both* poverty reduction and conflict management.

To test this assumption and improve the quality of programming in conflict environments, USAID funded a series of research grants that explored the relationship between economic development, conflict, and state failure. The *Evaluation and Assessment of Poverty and Conflict Interventions* (EAPC) project is Mercy Corps' contribution to this larger research effort. Mercy Corps' research project had three key components. First, it articulated several hypotheses or theories of change that inform Mercy Corps' economic development and peacebuilding programs. These are:

1. If we build economic relationships across lines of division, then we will promote stability by demonstrating tangible, concrete benefits to cooperation.
2. If we strengthen livelihoods opportunities in high-risk regions and/or for high-risk populations, then we will promote stability by reducing competition for scarce economic resources.
3. If we use a community mobilization approach to economic development, then we will promote stability by encouraging community self-reliance and by building productive relationships to local government.

Second, the research team developed indicators and data collection tools that were specifically tailored to these theories of change. Third, the team ran field tests of these measures and tools in three Mercy Corps programs in Uganda, Ethiopia, and Indonesia to see if they could capture key relationships between economic variables and stability.

This document presents the findings from the Uganda case study. In Uganda, the research team developed a survey and three participatory assessment tools to measure the impact of *Building Bridges to Peace* (BBP), a two-year USAID-funded program that Mercy Corps is implementing in the northeastern Karamoja region. For years, the Karamoja region has been plagued by chronic violence and under-development. The BBP program seeks to engage communities with a history of tension in joint economic activities in order to build relationships and promote reconciliation.

Data collection for the EAPC research project occurred in May and June of 2010, during BBP's mid-term evaluation. Preliminary analysis found several very interesting relationships between economic factors and different measures of stability, including:

- Increases in general economic interaction and market-based interaction are positively correlated with increased freedom of movement.

¹ For a good summary of recent research on the relationship between conflict, state failure, and poverty, see Andrew Loomis, "Poverty and Civil War," Brookings (June 2009)

- There is a strong positive correlation between shared resources (e.g. land, water, markets) and freedom of movement.
- Freedom of movement increased from baseline to endline in project areas.
- As groups share greater numbers of resources, the number of violent incidents decreases and perceptions of stability increase.
- Groups with low levels of economic interaction tend to define their relationships with other groups as ‘poor’. Groups with higher levels of economic interaction tend to define their relationships as ‘good’ or ‘neutral’.

These findings are very preliminary and it is important to stress that these are correlations, not causal claims. In addition, data was collected mid-way through the program and the research project did not make use of controlled comparisons so these findings should not be taken as evidence of program impact. The central goal of the research study was to *develop and test measures and tools that could start to capture relationships between economic variables and stability outcomes*. The findings above show that, in the Uganda case, these tools were able to do so and could capture interesting associations between economic and stability outcomes.

Most exciting, while the research project has ended, field teams are continuing to use, refine, and adapt the tools developed through this project and are beginning to show evidence of solid impact. For example, Mercy Corps Kenya adapted the EAPC tools to their youth employment program in the Rift Valley and a recent study of impact was able to show that young people who had some type of employment are less likely to participate in violence. Similarly, Mercy Corps Uganda is using the EAPC tools in their final program evaluation and has also included the use of control groups and – in a few months – will be able to show much more conclusive evidence of impact.

2. Country and Program Context: Building Bridges to Peace

The Karamoja region of northern Uganda is one of the poorest and least secure areas in the country. It suffers from chronic hunger and high levels of disease, illiteracy, and maternal and child mortality. Cattle raids, once a manageable traditional practice, have become more violent and frequent in recent years, due to an influx of small arms and the erosion of local dispute resolution systems that once tempered the number and severity of raids. Moreover, the dynamics of raiding have changed, shifting from a traditional cultural and livelihoods practice to an overwhelmingly cash-based business. Young warriors no longer keep the animals they raid, but sell them for cash to local businessmen and elements in the Ugandan military, who sell them onward in Uganda, Kenya, and Sudan. Pervasive violence in the region has led to a significant loss of life, damage to economic infrastructure, widespread mistrust among rival ethnic groups, and chronic underdevelopment. While the Ugandan government has increased efforts to develop Karamoja, it still lags far behind the rest of the country due to a legacy of economic policies that favor agriculture over raising cattle. A military disarmament campaign is reducing the number of small arms in the area, but a large military presence has added strain to already tense inter-community relationships.²

Since 2009, Mercy Corps has implemented the *Building Bridges to Peace* (BBP) program in Karamoja. The program seeks to promote reconciliation and address causes of conflict by engaging agro-pastoralist communities in a range of economic and peacebuilding activities. The economic dimensions of the *Building Bridges to Peace* program are grounded in two key theories of change. These are:

1. By building economic relationships across lines of division, stability will increase because people will perceive tangible, concrete economic benefits from cooperation and will place a higher value on cooperation than conflict with former adversaries.
2. By strengthening livelihoods in high-risk regions for high-risk populations, stability will increase because groups will be less likely to resort to violent competition as a way to access limited economic resources.

The program's economic activities are designed to strengthen livelihoods and encourage economic interaction between groups with a history of violence. Projects include small dams that increase access to water for multiple communities, agricultural projects that support joint farming on land that had previously been inaccessible due to insecurity, and the joint rehabilitation of local roads and markets. Economic activities are complemented by peacebuilding initiatives that are designed to build trust, improve relationships, and strengthen local conflict management mechanisms. These include training of local leaders in conflict management, joint monitoring of violent incidents, and community dialogues.

² For further reading, see Stites, E., et al. 2007. "Angering Akuju: Survival and Suffering in Karamoja. A report on livelihoods and human security in the Karamoja region of Uganda." Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center. Gray, S. et al. "Cattle Raiding, Cultural Survival and Adaptability of East African Pastoralists." *Current Anthropology*, vol 44, Supplement, Dec 2003. Mirzeler, M. and C. Young, "Pastoral politics in the northeast periphery in Uganda: AK-47 as change agent," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 38, 3 (2000), pp. 407-429.

3. Methodology

Mercy Corps staff held an initial workshop with the Uganda field team to introduce the research project, develop indicators for the theories of change associated with *Building Bridges to Peace*, and design and pilot data collection tools. The majority of the data collection for this research project occurred during the BBP mid-term evaluation from May-June 2010. Tools included:

- A **survey instrument** that polled 432 individuals from randomly selected households in 29 parishes in Kotido, Kaabong, and Pader districts.
- A **participatory assessment** conducted in a subset of the surveyed areas, including three sub-counties in each district. Mercy Corps staff conducted 27 focus groups using three participatory assessment tools: Conflict & Resource Mapping, Scored Community Relationship Mapping, and Disputes & Dispute Resolution. Each discussion included 8-10 men, women, and youth. Staff randomly selected communities and individual participants with the help of facilitators and community leaders.
- A **Violent Incident Reporting Form** that community-based Peace Committees and Joint Monitoring Teams used to collect data on a monthly basis.

By the time Mercy Corps received the EAPC research grant, the BBP program had already started and the baseline survey had been completed. In addition, data collection at mid-term did not include the use of control groups. Therefore, the findings from this study are not able to assess program impact. Rather, the research grant gave Mercy Corps the opportunity to 1) develop more rigorous measures and tools around the two theories of change discussed above; 2) apply them in a field context; 3) assess the extent to which the tools were able to show correlations between economic and stability measures; and 4) develop tools that will be used to assess impact in future programs.



Photograph: Jenny Vaughan/Mercy Corps

Data Collection Tools

Survey	72-item individual questionnaire covering livelihoods, security, relationships between divided communities, and dispute resolution.
Conflict & Resource Mapping	Participatory assessment tool that identifies local resources that community uses or needs/wants to use but can't access and explores the relationship between local resources and conflict.
Scored Community Relationship Mapping	Participatory assessment tool that identifies communities and external actors involved in conflict and describes relationships and social and economic interactions between actors.
Disputes & Dispute Resolution	Participatory assessment tool that identifies actors involved in local dispute resolution, evaluates effectiveness of local dispute resolution, and identifies common types of local conflict.
Violent Incident Reporting Form	Monitoring form that tracks the occurrence of violent incidents, including type of violence, key actors, consequences, and cause.

4. Preliminary Findings

Results from the Uganda case study show several statistically significant correlations between different measures of economic interaction and stability. It is important to stress that these are correlations, not causal claims, and it is not yet clear if the correlations mean that economic interaction leads to greater stability or the reverse. However, what these findings do show is that it is possible to measure shifts in economic variables and stability indicators and that in some cases, these factors are correlated. This represents a significant step forward in terms of developing more robust tools for examining the relationship between economic interventions and conflict.

In general, the survey tool yielded more statistically significant findings than the participatory assessment tools. The lower statistical significance of the participatory tools relates to the lengthy process of administering them (2-3 hours vs. 1 hour for surveys), allowing only a small sample in a given time frame. The participatory tools were also considerably more complex in terms of highly nuanced and multilayered questions, making the results more difficult to interpret. However, the participatory tools did provide very rich contextual data that helped supplement survey data and that point towards new directions for future research.

4.1. Survey Findings

Economic Interaction and Freedom of Movement

To measure freedom of movement, the survey asked respondents whether they avoided any areas due to insecurity (during the day or night) and whether violence limited their ability to conduct daily activities, such as getting water or going to their fields. Economic interaction was measured through three questions that asked respondents to describe general economic interactions with other groups, market interactions with members of other groups, and sharing of resources with other groups.

The most important finding is that certain types of economic interaction are highly correlated with freedom of movement. In particular, **as people interact more economically (in general) and increase their market interaction, freedom of movement increases.** In addition, **as groups share more resources (e.g. land or water) freedom of movement also increases.** While these are statistically significant results, the causal direction between economic interaction/resource sharing and freedom of movement is less clear. It could be that economic interaction is leading to increased freedom of movement or the reverse. As Mercy Corps uses these tools over time and compares treatment and control groups, causal direction is likely to become clearer.

Another key finding – one that does incorporate measurable changes over time – is that **freedom of movement increased significantly between program start (baseline) and the mid-term survey.** At program start, 90 percent of respondents said they avoided certain areas during the day. This dropped to 63 percent at mid-term. While we cannot draw any firm conclusions that attribute these results to the Mercy Corps program – and in fact it is very likely that the disarmament campaign played a large role in contributing to this result – it is encouraging that the tools were able to identify a change in people’s ability to move around the local area.

Economic Interaction and Violent Incidents

A number of other interesting associations emerged between certain types of economic interaction and three other key measures of stability: number of violent incidents, general perceptions of peace and security, and a sense of hope in a peaceful future. One key finding is that **as groups share**

greater numbers of resources, the number of violent incidents decreases and perceptions of stability increase. The data did not show a significant relationship between general economic interaction, market-based interaction, and these three stability indicators.

It may be that since conflict in Karamoja is primarily driven by competition over natural resources, purely market-based or general economic interactions have little bearing on perceptions of security or violent incidents. If this is the case, this potentially tells us something very interesting about what type of economic interventions will have an impact on stability issues, namely those that address natural resource competition.

4.2. Focus Group Discussions

Livelihoods and Stability

Two interesting findings concern the relationship between livelihoods and instability. These focus on a particular type of conflict incident, locally defined as ‘ambushes’. Using this particular measure of instability, the research revealed that **as livelihood opportunities decreased, ambushes increased.** Interestingly however, as livelihood opportunities increased, there was no change in the frequency of ambushes.

A preliminary interpretation is that while economic shocks may trigger more violent incidents, perhaps as a way to bolster faltering livelihoods through theft of other groups’ assets, increasing livelihoods overall does not seem to decrease a fairly consistent level of violent incidents that may or may not be related to economic conditions. In fact, the focus groups discussions highlighted how local cultural practices surrounding cattle raiding sustain a basic level of violence in Karamoja.

Economic Interaction and Stability

Another significant finding is that **as people interact more economically (in general), ambushes decrease.** It is difficult to square this finding with the earlier survey finding that showed no relationship between economic interaction and violent incidents. One possibility is that the focus group format, which is more intimate, may encourage more honest reporting about violent incidents. Or it may be that the sample size is too small and/or the data is too complex to attach much weight to any of the findings at this point. For other types of violent incidents, such as thefts, cattle raids, and political disputes, it was difficult to find any clear correlations with economic variables.

Anecdotal Findings

The focus group discussions provided rich, contextual detail that illuminated community members’ views on the relationship between poverty and conflict. The following findings are not statistically significant but they point toward further research to better understand the role of economic development in promoting stability:

- Poor relationships between communities feature lower frequency and less variation of economic interaction. Neutral and good relationships are more likely to be characterized by economic interactions such as trade and joint farming and grazing.
- Seven of nine focus groups see a benefit to interacting with the conflicting community. Four of these groups named economic benefits – including increased trade and increased freedom to move and graze animals – as the most valuable benefit.
- Local cultural practices and values play a complex role in perpetuating conflict. While all focus groups said that conflict leads to economic losses, including loss of cattle, human life,

household property, and crops, groups also said that violence is justified for purposes of ‘revenge’ or when property, especially cattle, is stolen.

- Community members cite poverty, competition over resources, and local cultural values surrounding cattle as causes of conflict.
- Communities believe that increasing livelihoods will bring peace, noting that this would improve the economic situation, reduce idleness, and divert attention away from cattle raiding. Despite the cultural reasons cited for raiding cattle, all communities said that people will stop raiding cattle if they have other ways of earning a living.

4.3. Recommendations

A number of challenges emerged during data collection and analysis. The most important relates to complexity. Many of the questions in the survey and participatory tools were nuanced and multilayered. Questions were designed this way in order to gather data on a range of complex ideas. Initially, Mercy Corps staff – particularly field staff – also believed that asking direct questions about sensitive issues like trust and violence would prove to be too difficult. Ultimately, this was not the case and simple, direct questions provided much more reliable data than nuanced questions. Recommendations that flow from the data analysis include:

- Focus on a limited number of more precise, less nuanced questions in both survey and focus group data to simplify data analysis and minimize ambiguous results.
- Simplify participatory tools so that they take less time to administer, more discussions can be conducted, and sample size can increase. This will allow a determination of which questions are yielding statistically significant findings and may tip some of the marginally significant findings into the significant range.

5. Indicators

Indicators varied in their ability to capture accurate information and their relevance to the changes in conditions that evaluators were trying to measure. Several indicators were included in multiple data collection tools to see if different data collection methods yielded different results. Below is a brief description of each indicator and the results it was able to capture.

1: Number of shared resources between conflicting communities

The survey data show that as communities share more resources freedom of movement increases, the number of violent incidents decreases, and perceptions of security increase. Focus group data, however, does not show any relationship between sharing resources and the number of conflict incidents. This inconsistency between the survey and the focus group data may be due to the lack of precision in the focus group questions. The focus group discussions did pick up an interesting trend: where there was agreement between conflicting communities over resource use, community members report more positive relationships with the conflicting community and appear to recognize the benefits of economic interaction.

2: Level of general economic interaction between conflicting communities

The survey data show that as general economic interaction increases, freedom of movement increases, but there was no relationship between this indicator and other stability measures. Data from the focus group discussions suggest only that as the frequency of economic interaction increases, the frequency of ambushes and cattle raids decrease. This indicator did help identify the most common types of economic interactions between conflicting communities, including trade/market interactions (91%), farming (37%), employment (26%), cattle keeping (21%), and borrowing or lending money (7%).

Focus group data also highlighted the importance of joint economic activity for good relationships. For example, the data suggest that joint grazing occurs only between communities with a “good” or “very good” relationship with their neighbors. In general, however, this variable and related questions did not seem to capture the rich economic interaction that is at the heart of BBP’s theories of change; namely that if people work together for mutual economic benefit they will recognize that they stand to lose something if cooperation unravels. In the future, for instance, Mercy Corps will continue to explore how to capture richer economic interaction, for example, by looking for economic interaction through economic associations.

3: Level of market interaction between conflicting communities

The survey data show that if people share a market with the conflicting community, then freedom of movement increases. However, there was no relationship between sharing a market and either perceptions of violence or incidence of violence. These inconsistent results may be due to the limited impact that individual market interactions have on wider conflict, as discussed above in Indicator 2.

4: Participation in economic associations

We were unable to analyze data related to this indicator because all focus groups indicated that there were no economic associations joining their community and the conflicting community. In light of the data about the individual-level economic interactions common in Karamoja, this data suggests that more formal, institutionalized economic relationships may currently be lacking. It also suggests a potentially very interesting area for future program focus, namely in building and strengthening economic associations that bring groups together.

5: Attitudes toward alternatives to livestock keeping

This indicator was created after local staff suggested that cultural attitudes toward cattle raiding might hinder the effectiveness of an integrated economic development and peacebuilding program. Data from the focus group discussions suggest that cultural values help drive conflict, but they also highlighted the role of poverty in cattle raiding: community members said that cattle raiding will stop if they have other ways to earn a living, and they cited poverty, competition over resources, and youth issues as key causes of cattle raiding. A version of this question in the survey would help to triangulate data and quantify attitudinal changes over time.

6: Freedom of movement

The survey data shows that as economic interactions between conflicting communities increase, freedom of movement increases. The Conflict & Resource Mapping tool complemented this data with descriptive information about insecure areas, including borders, hills, grazing lands, farmlands, forestland, water points, roads, and kraals. The most straightforward questions – were there any areas that you avoided going to or through because of insecurity during the day/night? – produced the most consistent results. In contrast, the question about ability to conduct specific daily activities produced inconsistent data, perhaps because of poor recall or limited relevance, and should be dropped in the future. The robustness of this indicator compared to the other stability measures raises questions for future research. For example, is freedom of movement a more reliable indicator because people have more knowledge of their own movements than of violent incidents?

7: Number of reported incidents of violence

Survey data indicate that as resource sharing between conflicting communities increases, the number of violent incidents decreases. Neither the survey nor the focus group discussions found any other relationships between economic interaction and number of violent incidents. While the indicator provided descriptive information about the level of conflict in target communities, the varying results from the different tools raise questions about the best way to collect this information. These

inconsistent findings may be due reluctance on the part of informants to report sensitive information, varying degrees of knowledge among different types of informants, reporting errors, or the limited impact of individual economic interactions on communal conflict. To improve data collection in the future, we will provide increased training and supervision of community-based monitoring. In addition, rather than asking about exact numbers of incidents, we will ask respondents to indicate a range of incidents (e.g., less than 5, more than 10).

8: Relationship with conflicting community

This indicator provided rich descriptions of community perceptions of their relationship with the conflicting community. For example, poor relationships between communities feature lower frequency and less variation of economic interaction, while neutral and good relationships are more likely to be characterized by economic interactions such as trade and joint farming and grazing. However, the indicator yielded few statistically significant results, perhaps due to small sample size and difficulty analyzing qualitative data. Increased sample size and greater focus on key questions will facilitate data collection and analysis in the future.

6. Data Collection Tools: Challenges and Recommendations

6.1. Survey

The survey allowed us to collect enough data ($n = 432$) to conduct statistical analysis with significant results. This allowed us to compare data from baseline to midterm as well as to explore some of our key research questions. Challenges included:

- The length of the survey (72 items) made it time-consuming.
- The variety of types of questions made it difficult for enumerators to provide instructions.
- Questions that aimed to capture increasing nuance provided little additional data.
- It was difficult to translate key concepts into the local languages.

Recommendations: remove questions that are duplicative, focus on key research questions, and remove nuance, all to provide more succinct answers over a shorter time period. In addition, build in more time for translation of the surveys during the training period.

Measuring Indicators: Data Collection Tools and Questions

The indicator numbers in the following table correspond to the numbered indicators in Section 5

Indicator	Tool	Question
1	Survey	“Do people in your community share resources with people from [conflicting community]?” Yes/No
	Conflict & Resource Mapping	“Do people in your community share resources with people from [conflicting community]?” Yes/No “Are there any resources used by other communities? For each shared resource explain whether there is agreement between the communities regarding its use and whether it is a source of tension.”
2	Survey	“In the last 3 months, did you personally interact economically with people from [conflicting community]?” Yes/No “If yes, how did you interact?” trade/at the market, cattle keeping, farming, borrowing or lending money, employment, other
	Scored Community Relationship Mapping	“In the past 3 months, have there been any interactions between your community and [conflicting community]? If so, what kinds of interactions?” “In the past 3 months, how often have your community and [conflicting community] interacted economically?” never, less than one time per month, one-two times per month, weekly, or daily
3	Survey	“Think of the market that you go to most frequently. During the past three months, have people from [conflicting community] gone to that market, too?” Yes/No
4	Scored Community Relationship Mapping	“Are there any formal economic associations between your community and members of [conflicting community]?”
5	Disputes & Dispute Resolution	“Why do people raid cattle? What is needed to stop cattle raiding? Do you think people will stop raiding cattle if they have other ways to earn a living?”
6	Survey	“In the last 3 months, were there any areas that you avoided going to or through because of insecurity during the day?” Yes/No “In the last 3 months, were there any areas that you avoided going to or through because of insecurity during the night?” Yes/No “In the last 3 months, did insecurity ever prevent you or a member of your household from...going to the market?...getting water for household use?...going to your field?...moving your animals to new pasture?...moving your animals to water?...earning money or going to work?...going to school?...getting medical care?” Yes/No
	Conflict & Resource Mapping	“Are there any areas of insecurity on the map? If yes, describe the areas of insecurity, including where they are located and why they are considered insecure.”
7	Survey	“To your knowledge, have there been any incidents of violence in your village in the last three months? If yes, about how many incidents occurred?”
	Conflict & Resource Mapping	“Did any conflict incidents occur in the last year? Locate any conflict incidents on the map.”
	Dispute & Dispute Resolution	“List the types of disputes that occur in the community. Rank them according to which type of dispute occurs the most frequently.”
8	Violent Incident Reporting Form	“What type of incident occurred?”
	Scored Community Relationship Mapping	“Would you describe the relationship between A and B as very good, good, neutral, bad, or very bad? Why do you describe the relationship between your community and [conflicting community] as good or bad? In the past 3 months, have there been any interactions between your community and [conflicting community]? If so, what kinds of interactions?”

6.2. Conflict & Resource Mapping

The Conflict & Resource Mapping tool explored access to needed resources and analyzed the links between conflict and livelihoods. Of the three participatory tools, this tool was the easiest to use and communities seemed most engaged during the interview. Challenges included:

- Complex and open-ended questions often failed to produce detailed answers. For example, in response to the question, “Are there any relationships between the location of conflict incidents/no-go areas and other features, including boundaries, livelihoods, resources, etc.?” participants gave answers such as, “Lack of access to resources is made worse by the conflict,” but did not elaborate on how access to resources might impact conflict.
- It was challenging for discussants to quantify specific resources. When asked about resources they shared, accessed, or could not access, community members listed a wide range of resources, including schools, roads, farms, and forests. This made it difficult to quantify inaccessible resources and assess the severity of resource constraints across locations.
- Quantifying many parts of the focus group discussions allowed for more rigorous analysis of results, however it may have inadvertently limited some of the richness of ‘traditional’ focus group discussions. In the future, it will be important how to keep in certain key quantitative dimensions, while not restricting the free flow of information and ideas that are such an important part of these types of discussions.
- Facilitators were reluctant to ask a politically sensitive question regarding administrative boundaries. This question was initially eliminated. Facilitators later tried the question, without adverse reaction, and decided they should have asked it from the start.

Recommendations: The tools need to be revised to ask more specific and straightforward questions and to ask about specific resources (e.g. land, water, roads) in order to understand their connections to conflict. Sensitive questions need to be piloted by the team to determine how best to ask them and to test for negative reactions, increasing facilitator confidence with sensitive topics.

M&E in Action: Learning from the Conflict & Resource Mapping Tool

Understanding how livelihoods are affected by violence

Although the Uganda peacebuilding team knew that conflict in Karamoja was associated with lower access to resources and had already identified insecure locations, the Conflict & Resource Mapping tool was crucial in providing additional insights into the relationship between livelihoods and conflict. Participants drew community maps, marking resources such as human settlements, roads, kraals, water points, grazing lands, farmlands, forests, markets, schools, and health centers. Using their own symbols, they added a layer of conflict incidents, no-go areas, and buffer zones to show staff where most violence occurred. Discussions following the mapping exercise elaborated the connections between livelihoods and conflict: areas crucial to livelihoods were the most susceptible to violence. Border areas were highlighted as the most insecure, with hills, grazing lands, farmlands, forestland, water points, roads, and kraals following in descending order of insecurity. The tool also confirmed the role of insecurity in limiting access to resources. It pointed toward the ways in which limited access to resources may perpetuate conflict. Inability to access land for farming, for example, leaves land wild and isolated and provides places for raiders to hide and ambush passers-by. Drawings of resource locations and conflict incidents will allow for comparison in the final assessment, showing whether access to resources has increased over the life of the program.

6.3. Scored Community Relationship Mapping

This tool generated information on the quality of relationships between conflicting communities, explored why these relationships were good or bad, asked a series of questions about actors involved in the conflict – including ‘outside’ actors not directly involved in the dispute, and asked participants to explain what could improve bad relationships and promote peace. Challenges included:

- While the tool generated good information about economic interactions and behaviors between communities, it did not capture attitudes toward such interactions.
- The lack of data gathered about attitudes towards economic interaction prevented the full testing of the first theory of change, which hypothesizes that stability will increase as we build economic relationships across lines of division due to increased perceptions of the benefits of cooperation.
- Communities found it challenging to describe relationships between outside actors, because these are relationships that don't involve their community.
- A large number of questions made the tool time consuming, and as participants grew fatigued the later questions yielded less information.

Recommendations: The tool needs to be revised so that questions ask about attitudes as well as behaviors. Questions should also focus solely on the relationships between the target communities and other actors *directly* involved in the conflict, as these are most readily evaluated by community members.

6.4. Disputes and Dispute Resolution

This tool helped the team to explore the types of disputes that characterize conflict in Karamoja. Community members' comments about barriers to peace explained the continuation of conflict. The tool provided some challenges, and with this tool in particular several changes were tried during the research to test areas for improvement:

- While the tool identified the most significant disputes in the community, it did not explore the causes of conflict.
- *Tested Improvement:* At the suggestion of program staff, a set of questions was added to explore the causes of cattle raiding, including: "Why do people raid cattle? What is needed to stop cattle raiding? Do you think people will stop raiding cattle if they have other ways to earn a living? Why or why not?" These questions generated many ideas for stopping cattle raiding.
- As with the Scored Community Relationship Mapping tool, this tool did not initially ask about attitudes toward violence but instead focused on behaviors.
- *Tested Improvement:* The following set of questions was added to in order to explore the acceptability of violence as a means of resolving disputes: "Are there situations where you think violence is justified? If so, what situations? Why? What if your property is threatened? What if you are pursuing your livelihood? etc."
- Participant perceptions of successful dispute resolution actors did not always correspond to these actors' rankings of effectiveness in resolving specific types of disputes. For example, while NGOs were often cited as the most effective dispute resolution actors, they were rarely cited as successful in resolving common community disputes. The research teams concluded that ranking dispute resolution actors with regard to *specific types of disputes* would lead to more accurate results since communities would draw on concrete examples when giving opinions.
- As with the Scored Community Relationship Mapping tool, it was challenging to collect information as discussions could last as long as 3 hours and people became fatigued.

Beyond the improvements described above, the most important recommendation concerns building the tool to focus discussion on the top two or three key types of dispute in a community once they are identified. This would shorten the time needed and lead to richer information about a smaller number of key disputes.

M&E in Action: Learning from the Disputes & Dispute Resolution tool

Why are some dispute resolution actors more effective than others?

Chief of Party Sam Koroma had long suspected that the Peace Committees and Joint Monitoring Teams trained through the program were not meeting their potential as dispute resolution actors in Karamoja. While the midterm survey indicated that the Peace Committees and Joint Monitoring were involved in resolving 37 percent of community disputes over the previous year, only one of nine groups participating in the Disputes & Dispute Resolution discussions named the Peace Committees as one of the top five actors in dispute resolution. The DDR tool revealed that community members are more likely to go to pre-existing local structures to resolve disputes, even if those local structures are ineffective. Further discussions then shed light on what made particular dispute resolution actors more effective than others: dispute resolution actors were considered *ineffective* if they were biased, slow to react to conflict, corrupt, possessing little authority, or indecisive, and *effective* if they were impartial, quick to react to conflict, trustworthy, respected, and authoritative. Using this knowledge, the Uganda peacebuilding team can increase the impact of dispute resolution training by focusing skills-building activities on those actors most likely to be approached by the community and to be effective in resolving disputes.

6.5. Violent Incident Reporting Form

The Violent Incident Reporting Form was designed to gather data on violent incidents as they occurred. However, field staff were concerned that this data was less reliable than the survey data because its collection relied on volunteer monitors. Program staff didn't receive monitoring forms regularly, and some forms were filled out incorrectly. In order to enhance reliability, staff should reinforce training in the tool and contact community-based monitors at regular intervals to collect data and verify reported incidents.

7. Conclusion

These Uganda findings present a range of interesting correlations that point towards future research. While these findings are very preliminary and cannot be taken as evidence of program impact, the central objective of *developing and testing measures and tools that start to capture relationships between economic variables and stability outcomes* was met. Most exciting, while the research project has ended, field teams are continuing to use, refine, and adapt the tools developed through this project and are beginning to show evidence of solid impact.

For example, Mercy Corps Kenya adapted the EAPC tools to their youth employment program in the Rift Valley and a recent study of impact was able to show that young people who had some type of employment are less likely to participate in violence. Similarly, Mercy Corps Uganda is using the EAPC tools in their final program evaluation and has also included the use of control groups and – in a few months – will be able to show much more conclusive evidence of impact.